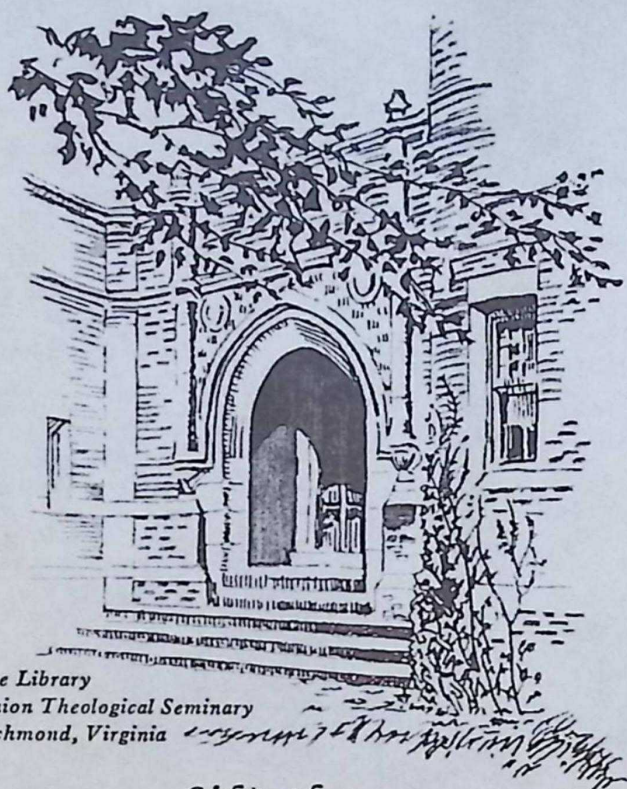




MI
3
AV
N234



*The Library
Union Theological Seminary
Richmond, Virginia*

Gift of

Dr. James H. Smylie

2
2 gnc
27

27386

NARRATIVE

OF THE

STATE OF RELIGION,

WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

MAY, 1827.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM F. GEDDES.

.....

1827.

THE LIBRARY
of the
Presbyterian Church
of the United States
of America
Richmond, Va.

MI
3
AV
N234

NARRATIVE.

The General Assembly would meet the expectations of their fellow Christians, by presenting them with a record of the afflictions and the triumphs of the church within their bounds, during the past year. The whole cannot be told; but enough *can* be told to awaken the tenderest sensibilities of the christian's heart, and to excite mingled emotions of sorrow, gratitude, and joy.

In the picture which has been presented to the Assembly from the different sections of the church, there is a mixture of light and shade—good and evil alternately obtain: although they have reason to thank God that the indications of the progressive triumphs of divine truth and grace, are strong and palpable, calculated to call into action the yet dormant energies of the church, and fill her mouth with songs of praise.

We shall first speak of the *evils* which exist. From many places, we hear complaints of the extensive prevalence of immorality, under its different forms. *Sabbath-breaking* is particularly noticed as prevailing in almost every region of our country. We hear with pain of the contempt which is poured upon this holy day, by the driving of waggons and stages, the running of canal and steam boats, the opening of mails, the travelling of men of business and pleasure: by hunting, fishing, horse-racing, visiting, distilling, driving of cattle to market, and other practices equally incompatible with the sanctity of the day, and the good order of society. We record, however, with pleasure the fact, that among the members of the mercantile community in some of our large cities, a reformation has taken place, and they refrain from travelling in pursuit of their worldly business on this sacred day. It would rejoice the hearts of the Assembly, if their good example were universally followed by that extensive and influential class of our fellow citizens.

The report of abounding *intemperance* is still heard from many sections of the church. From the north, the west, and the south, we hear the loudest complaints of the ravages of this destructive vice. And, although in many places, its progress has been partially arrested by the influence of moral, religious, and physical causes, we have to lament that it still exerts a desolating power over vast numbers in our land. When, O when, shall man "the glory of creation," cease to merge his high character and destinies in this sink of brutish defilement!

Profaneness still partially prevails to dishonour its subjects, and insult the majesty of heaven: and *gambling*, that insatiating and de-

destructive vice, is still maintaining its accursed sway over thousands of its hapless victims. By this remark we intend to condemn the practice of *gambling by lottery*, which under the sanction of Legislative patronage, is, in several places within our bounds, encouraging a wild spirit of speculation, paralysing industry, and carrying disappointment, poverty and sorrow into many habitations.

Within the bounds of some of our Presbyteries, we hear of the industrious efforts of heretical teachers to propagate their pernicious tenets. The progress of evangelical truth is awakening the enmity and putting in array the forces of the prince of darkness. The church needs only to be told of these signs of the times, to perceive the obligations which they impose, and the demands which they make upon her intellectual and moral resources. The day of spiritual conflict is approaching, and it becomes the church to stand ready to sustain her acquired glory, and to hold fast and defend the standard of the cross.

But we are called to notice evils of another kind. In some of the northern, and southern, and in the greater part of the middle and western sections of our church, we hear complaints of the prevalence of lukewarmness, and a great want of evangelical zeal among the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus. The "spirit of slumber," seems to have deadened all their energies, and they are resting contented with the forms of religion, without feeling its vivifying power. As an effect of this, they are found conforming to the world, in its *fashionable amusements*, frequenting the *theatre* and the *ball-room*, and yielding to the *spirit of strife*, whose deadly influence resists the impulses of the Holy Ghost, and is calculated to banish him forever from their hearts. Over such we mourn, and our prayer is, that the Spirit of the Lord would breathe upon them and cause them again to live—"Awake O north wind, and come thou south, and blow upon these parts of thy garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

In surveying the destitute settlements which are without the regular ministrations of the gospel, the remote northern parts of the State of New York, the States of Ohio, Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Georgia, and Kentucky, present themselves in mournful array before us. For although in all these, there are some regular, faithful ministers of Christ, there is an immense territory lying waste, without labourers to cultivate it. Now and then, a travelling missionary scatters the seed of the kingdom. But having none to succeed him, the fruit of his toil is blasted for want of efficient cultivation. Of this we have painful evidence in the fact, that within the limits of a single Presbytery in the Synod of Indiana, *five churches* have become extinct during the last year, from this cause. The present destitute condition of those extensive western regions, and the rapidly increasing population, which far surpasses the increase of ministers, furnish pressing motives to exertion and prayer on the part of the churches, that the labourers may be multiplied, and that these thousands of our fellow sinners may not be left to perish for want of the bread and the water of life. *They are our brethren, and they cry to us for help.* Let us not be deaf to their entreaties, lest

"their cries enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," and he come and smite us with a curse.

But from these scenes of moral darkness, on which the heart of the Christian dwells with pain, we turn your attention to more enlivening details. From "the lion's dens, and the mountains of the leopards," we would invite you to come along with us to the peaceful habitation of the Saviour, and enjoy the holy pleasure which springs from the contemplation of his presence, and the wonderful works of his grace.

In enumerating the blessings of the past year, the Assembly would notice with thankfulness the growing spirit of pious and benevolent enterprise. *Bible, Tract, Missionary and Education Societies* are multiplying in almost every section of our church, and increasing in efficiency and usefulness. The *American Home Missionary Society* has been conducting its operations during the past year with augmented success. The *Pennsylvania Home Missionary Society* has also been labouring in the same good cause. Christians seem to be rising to the fulfilment of their master's command, and engaging with an active zeal in the work of preaching the gospel to every creature. A noble liberality in furnishing means for the support and extension of benevolent institutions prevails. The cause of Christ is drawing contributions from every department in society. And it is matter of gratulation that professional men of high character and standing, are becoming more decidedly the patrons of these efficient charities.

Bible Classes are to be found throughout a large portion of our churches, and have been greatly blessed as a means of instruction and conversion. As nurseries of truth and piety, they deserve to be tenderly cherished and faithfully sustained.

The system of *Sabbath School* instruction is extending its healing influence over our land, and from many of our churches is receiving a liberal patronage. The *American Sunday School Union*, concentrated in the City of Philadelphia, is in successful progress, and promises to be a rich and lasting blessing to our country, and to the Church of God. To recommend it to the prayers, and the vigorous co-operation of all our Churches, it need only be stated, that in their last annual report, the managers inform their patrons, that from correct sources, they are able to number upwards of *fourteen hundred* souls, including teachers and pupils who have been hopefully converted by the instrumentality of Schools in their connection, since the origin of their institution, in 1818. Men of rank and influence are lending a helping hand to this benevolent enterprise. Let this work of pious charity proceed—Heaven shall recompence its deeds of mercy.

As associated with these religious and benevolent institutions, and contributing to their spiritual effect, is the *Monthly concert of prayer*, which appears to be extensively observed. Other meetings for prayer and conference are multiplying, and giving expansion to the labours of Christian benevolence. Indeed the spirit of prayer, is the very spirit of Christian effort, and breathes its hallowed influence over every institution which has for its object the glory of God, and the salvation

of men. The Assembly would look forward to the day when the voice of prayer shall be heard from every dwelling, and when our concerts for prayer, shall be crowded with the sons and daughters of the Almighty, invoking the effusions of the Holy Ghost on all the inhabitants of our guilty world.

The cause of *seamen* continues to receive a liberal and increasing patronage in our great commercial cities. In Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, the friends of piety continue to labour with unabated zeal, for the salvation of this long neglected portion of our race.—The American Seamen's *Friend Society* is noticed as an important engine in contributing to their spiritual welfare. They ask, and the Assembly would ask for them the prayers of all the Churches.

But while the Assembly would rejoice and bless God for sustaining, and multiplying, and giving increased action to the benevolent institutions within our Church, and throughout our land, they have still higher grounds of joy and gratitude to the Head of the Church, for the showers of divine grace, with which their Zion has been favoured during the past year. The Holy Ghost, like a mighty rushing wind, has descended and rested on many assemblies, and by his all-conquering energy has subdued many stout hearts which were fraught with enmity against God, and the gospel of his grace. The past year has been emphatically a year of *revivals*. To enumerate all the towns and congregations on which God has poured out his Holy Spirit would swell our report beyond its assigned limits. Suffice it to say, that upwards of *twenty Presbyteries* have participated, in a greater or less degree, in the refreshing showers with which God has been watering his Church.—Within the bounds of the *Synod of Genesee*, we may mention the Presbyteries of Rochester and Buffalo. In the *Synod of Geneva*, the Presbyteries of Bath, Geneva, Onondaga and Cayuga. In Onondaga, from 4 to 500 have been added to the Church, and in Cayuga, about 900. In the *Synod of Albany*, the Presbyteries of Columbia, Champlain, Londonderry, Troy, Ogdensburg and Oneida. The last two have been most signally visited. In Oneida, 1300 are reported to have joined the Church, and in the Presbyteries of Oneida and Ogdensburg, *some thousands* are enumerated as the hopeful subjects of converting grace. In the *Synod of New York*, refreshing influences have descended on portions of the Presbyteries of Long Island, North River, Hudson, and the first Presbytery of New York. In the *Synod of New Jersey*, on the Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Elizabethtown. In the *Synod of Philadelphia*, on a few of the Churches within the Presbyteries of Philadelphia, Carlisle and Baltimore. In the City of Baltimore, a good work is now in progress in the first and second Churches. In the *Synod of Kentucky*, the Presbytery of Transylvania has been signally blessed. In the midst of other trophies of converting grace, they have to record the hopeful conversion for the *Teacher and several of the pupils in the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb* within their limits. In the *Synod of South Carolina and Georgia*, the Presbyteries of Orange, Fayetteville, Georgia, Union and Hopewell, have been more or less favoured. The two last

have had the greatest additions to their communion, and the Lord is still carrying on his glorious work in the midst of them.

For all that the Lord has thus been doing, and is continuing to do for his Zion, the Assembly would rejoice and give thanks to his holy name. And it is their fervent prayer that while God is working for the advancement of his glory, and the salvation of souls, those who are called to co-operate with him, may be richly endued with the spirit of wisdom, of grace, and of a sound mind, that the work may not be marred by human imperfection, but that the building of God may rise with symmetry and grandeur towards its summit in the heavens.

Upon several of our Colleges, the Spirit has been poured out. Centre College, in Kentucky, Athens, in Georgia, and Dickinson, in Pennsylvania have all participated more or less in the spiritual bounty of heaven's converting grace.

Our *Theological Seminaries* continue to receive the liberal support of the friends of sound learning and vital godliness. From these fountains, streams are issuing to water our parched land, and make glad the city of our God. The number of efficient ministers is increasing, and our prayer is, that they may increase an hundred fold, until every destitute region of our world shall be supplied, and every ear be greeted with the voice of the messengers of salvation.

To the memory of our brethren* who have rested from their labours since our last meeting, we would here pause to consecrate a monument of fraternal affection. By the Master's order, they have been taken from our ranks, and their departure admonishes us to increased exertion before the night of death cometh when no man can work.

From some of our sister Churches in correspondence with us, reports have been received. The *General Association of Connecticut*, although labouring under many discouragements, are still cheered by the manifestations of the divine favour in the prosperity of their benevolent institutions, and in the progress of revivals throughout many of their churches.

From the *General Association of Massachusetts*, the reports are highly animating. There have been, in many places, powerful revi-

* Rev. Abner Towne, of the Presbytery of Oneida.

James Southworth,	do.	do.
Cyrus Downs,	do.	Otsego.
Sam'l P. Williams,	do.	Newburyport.
William Arthur,	do.	Lancaster.
Matthew Lyle,	do.	Hanover.
Angus Diarmed,	do.	Fayetteville.
Amzi Armstrong, D. D.	do.	Newark.
Lyman Whitney,	do.	West Lexington.
Samuel Davies Hoge,	do.	Athens.
James Adams,	do.	Richland.
Stephen Kinsley,	do.	Champlain.
David Phillips,	do.	Muhlenburg.
Saml. C. Caldwell,	do.	Mecklenburg.
James Hall, D. D.	do.	Concord.
Wm. F. Watts,	do.	
Wm. Wilson,	do.	Harmony.

vals during the past year. In the city of Boston and Berkshire county particularly, the Lord has been marching through the midst of his churches, and nearly 800 souls are numbered among the fruits of his reviving grace. We would rejoice with our eastern brethren in this testimony of God's grace to the cause of evangelical truth.

The reports from the *Reformed Dutch Church* are encouraging. Revivals exist in a few of their congregations. The cause of Domestic Missions is receiving additional support, and their Theological Seminary is well sustained, and promises to be a lasting blessing to their church.

From the other ecclesiastical bodies in connection with us, no reports have been received.

In closing this narrative, the Assembly would remark, that their present session has been to them, one of peculiar and solemn interest. They have had the wonderful doings of God spread before their eyes, and while they have been excited to mourning, for the remaining desolations of Zion, their hearts have been made to rejoice in the triumphs of redeeming grace. Called upon by the signal movements of Jehovah's providence and love towards them, and the churches under their care, the General Assembly appropriated an entire day during their sessions, to the solemn duties of *thanksgiving, humiliation and prayer*. As the representatives of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, they endeavoured to bring the whole interests of that church before the throne of grace, and in the name of their ascended Saviour, to plead for additional tokens of his mercy on her behalf. It was a day of mingled sorrow and joy to their hearts. It was a day which they would wish to record, as the commencement of a new era in the history of their ecclesiastical proceedings, and which, from the evident indications of the presence of the Holy Ghost, they humbly trust will shed a benign influence over the character and transactions of that body for years to come.

Brethren, pray for us, and for yourselves, and for the whole church of God. It is a day of hope in relation to the souls of men. The hour of the world's redemption draweth near, when nations shall be born at once, and when the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Saviour. May the good Lord hasten forward the long expected hour, and let our united cry be, "*Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.*"

By order of the Assembly,

E. S. ELY, Stated Clerk.

